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Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00286 101337Z

46
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 AID-05 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-05 SAB-01 SAM-01

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 SCA-01 OC-05 CCO-00

SCCT-01 /106 W
---------- 048708
O R 101332Z JAN 76
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8055
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
COMMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 00286 101337Z

DIA WASHDC

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CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0286

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: ESCALATION ON MILITARY AND POLITICAL FRONTS

SUMMARY. BEIRUT FIGHTING SPREADS AGAIN INTO INTER-
NATIONAL HOTEL DISTRICT. SEIZGE OF TEL ZAATAR IN EASTERN
SUBURBS CONTINUES UNABATED, WITH BATTLE LINES IN THAT
AREA APPARENTLY SHIFTING VERY LITTLE. KARAME-CHAMOUN
FEUD MARKED BY INCREASINGLY BITTER INSULTS EXCHANGED
IN PUBLIC MEDIA. THERE IS STILL MUCH SPECULATION THAT
PRES FRANGIE AND SYRAIN PRES ASAD WILL MEET SOON.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE SPREAD OF FIGHTING TO KANTARI AND THE INTERNATILNAL
HOTEL DISTRICT DURING NIGHT OF JAN 9-10 HAS UPPED THE ANTE
AGAIN IN BEIRUT'S CIVIL STRIFE. KATAEB MILITIA, WHICH HAD
NEVER COMPLETELY LEFT HOLIDAY INN AFTER LAST HOEL ROUND,
APPARENTLY INCREASED ITS EFFECTIVES THERE EVENING JAN 9.
THEY AND IBRAHIM QULAYLAT'S MURABITOUN--WHO HAD NEVER
LEFT MURR BLDG AND LIKEWISE SEEM TO HAVE GON EON ALERT
JAN 9--PROCEEDED TO BLAST AWAY AT EACH OTHER THROUGH
MORNING JAN 10. AS OF 1200 HOURS (LOCAL) THERE IS LULL IN
THAT AREA, BUT FIGHTING MAY PICK UP AGAIN SOON. SUR-
PRISINGLY, AN INTERNAL SECURITY SOURCE TOLD US MORNING
JAN 10 THAT HOTEL FIGHTING IS NOT A MAJOR WORRY AND THAT
INTERNAL SECURITY MEN ARE STILL ON THE SCENE. BUT THIS
DOWNPALYING OF THAT BATTLE IS BELIED BY SEVERE EXCHANGES OF
FIRE AUDIBLE DURING MORNING FROM EMBASSY, JUST 800 METERS
AWAY.

2. MEANWHILE, TEL ZAATAR SIEGE GOES ON WITHOUT LETUP.
HEAVY FIGHTING OCCURRED IN MOST OF EAST BEIRUT SUBURBS
NIGHT OF JAN 9-10. AS OF MID-MORNING JAN 10, NORTHEAST
SIN EL-FIL APPARENTLY CENTER OF WORST CLASHES. REPORTS
STILL VARY ON TO AND FROM OF BATTLE, BUT OUR GENERAL IMPRESSION
REMAINS THAT LINES ORIGINALLY ASSUMED WHEN BLOCKADE BEGAN
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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 00286 101337Z

SEVERAL DAYS AGO ARE STILL IN EFFECT. A TEMPORARILY SUCCESS-
FUL PALESTINIAN ADVANCE IN HORCH THABET SECTION, DE-
SIGNED TO LINK UP PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST MILITIAS (BEIRUT 224),
WAS EVIDENTLY THROWN BACK BY KATAEB. THIS IS IN-
DIRECTLY CONFIRMED BY LEFTIST PAPERS JAN 10, WHICH PLAY
UP ACCUSATION THAT ELEMENTS OF ARMY ARE SIDEING WITH
KATAEB AND SAY THAT THIS EXPLAINS PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWALS.
LEFTIST DAILY "AS-SAFIR" IS ALSO STRESSING THEME THAT PAL-

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ESTINIANS HAVE SHOWN WHAT THEY CAN DO, AND FOR TIME BEING
IT IS UP TO LEBANESE TO STOP FIGHT. WE TAKE THIS AS FURTHER
SIGN THAT MAINLINE PALESTINIANS ARE RELUCTANT TO ESCALATE
FIGHT AT THIS JUNCTURE.

3. EFFORTS AT POLITICAL LEVEL TO ARRANGE CEASEFIRE HAVE
AGAIN PROVED UNAVAILING. THERE WAS NO MEETING OF
HGIHER COORDINATION COMMITTEE JAN 9, EITHER OFFICIAL OR
OTHERWISE, AND AS OF LAST REPORT NONE HAS BEEN SET FOR
JAN 10. PREMIER KARAME HAS COME OUT WITH A CEASEFIREK
PLAN SIMILAR TO THE ONE RECENTLY PUT FORWARD BY GHASSAN
TUEINI (BEIRUT 224) WITH ADDITIONAL POINT CALLING FOR RENEWED
POLITICAL "DIALOGUE," BUT WE UNDERSTAND CHRISTIAN SIDE SO
FAR UNWILLING TO ABANDON SKIEGE.

4. THE KARAME-CHAMOUN FEUD REMAINS HOT, WITH THE TWO
LEADERS EXCHANKGING INCREASINGLY BITTER INSULTS IN PUBLIC
MEDIA (SEE BEIRUT 280). THIS WOULD SEEM TO MAKE CABINET
A DEAD LETTER AS FORUM FOR ENDING CURRENT ROUND OF STRIFE.

5. ONLY UPBEAT NOTE IS CONTINUING SPECULATION THAT PRES
FRANGIE MAY SOON CONFER WITH SYRAIN PRES HAFEZ EL-ASAD
ON THE CRISIS. SPEAKER OF LEBANESE PARLIAMENT, KAMAL
AL-ASSAD, IS GOING TO DAMASCUS TODAY AS LATEST IN SERIES
OF BEIRUT EMISSARIES TO SYRIAN CAPITAL. WHILE THER IS YET NO
CERTAINTY THAT A MEETING OF THE TWO PRESIDENTS CAN BE AR-
RANGED AMID TANGLE OF LEBANESE AND INTER-ARAB SUSPICIONS
SURROUNDING THE CRISI, THERE ARE RISING HOPES THAT
THIS IS BEING WORKED OUT BY THE ENVOYS. ONE THING CLEAR
IS THAT SYRIA HAS NOT GIVEN UP ITS ROLE AS MEDIATOR.
GODLEY

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